

An Open Letter to Global Policymakers on COVID-19 and Wildlife Trade

The world is in crisis. The novel coronavirus disease known as COVID-19 is costing the lives of increasing numbers of people and devastating the global economy.

Tragically, this type of pandemic was predicted for years by infectious disease experts. We didn't know where or when it would arrive, but we knew it would occur and that it would likely come from a zoonotic outbreak – whereby a pathogen jumps from animals to humans. We could have and should have been prepared to prevent or halt it before it became extremely damaging.

We know what needs to be done to greatly decrease the likelihood of future pandemics. Wildlife trafficking substantially increases our globally shared risk. Wildlife markets that sell live animals of different species warehoused together in unsanitary conditions are mixing vessels for the emergence of dangerous viruses in human populations.

We call on policymakers everywhere to immediately and urgently undertake these steps to reduce the chances of another pandemic:

- **Shut down high-risk wildlife markets, with a priority focus on those in high-density urban areas**
- **Urgently scale up efforts to combat wildlife trafficking and halt trade of high-risk taxa**
- **Strengthen efforts to reduce consumer demand for high-risk wildlife products**

High-risk human-wildlife interactions and interfaces that facilitated the emergence of COVID-19, SARS and Ebola continue to exist in emerging disease hotspots globally.

In our hyper-connected modern world, the emergence of a new virus anywhere can impact people everywhere. We are now at the moment to join forces across nations, sectors, scientific disciplines and civil society to ensure that never again does high-risk wildlife trade lead to a global pandemic.

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